

Sample Advocacy Papers

Title identifies topic, and the word "Proposal" communicates that the document will ask for the reader to make a decision.

Begin with the end in mind. The "Purpose" statement immediately answers the reader's first questions, "Okay, what am I looking at? What are we trying to do here?"

The "Background" section provides context, explaining how the proposal relates to the larger picture.

Paragraphs begin with topic sentences that state the paragraph's main idea.

Paper is organized logically. Here, a thematic pattern is used, as each facet of the main idea is given its own paragraph(s) in the discussion.

The argument appeals to reason throughout, never emotion. Statistics and references to PYFP standards add credibility.

The subject matter is explained accurately. There are no technical errors in the paper.

Proposal to Align the CAP Cadet Fitness Program with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program

- 1. Purpose**
To obtain authorization to align the cadet fitness program test with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, thereby fulfilling CAP's Strategic Plan objective 6.5.1.
- 2. Background**
In 2003 CAP aligned its Cadet Physical Fitness Test with the President's Challenge, the nation's premier measure of youth fitness at the time. The President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition discontinued the President's Challenge in 2012 and replaced with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program (PYFP). By adapting our fitness test to align with the updated program, CAP will adopt the latest evidence-based practices and stay in the forefront of youth fitness.
- 3. Discussion**
 - a. **Comprehensive Program.** The proposed Active Cadet Fitness Program (ACFP), is a fully redesigned, comprehensive program to increase cadets' physical fitness and motivate them to develop a lifelong habit of regular activity. While there are multiple facets to the ACFP, the assessment portion has received the vast majority of the feedback.
 - b. **Fitness Testing & Retention.** Current standards require cadets to pass an increasingly challenging fitness test to advance in the cadet program. We hear frequently from members who have cadets that are discouraged because the fitness standards are out of reach for the cadets' fitness level. In a survey 75% of respondents agreed with the statement, "CAP fitness standards have held back cadets who I felt were ready for promotion. These cadets frequently leave the program since they're unable to have their needs met."

The Active Cadet Fitness Program seeks to solve this problem in two ways. The new PYFP standards are health-related, rather than normative. This means that they will be more attainable for cadets that aren't athletically gifted. In addition, cadets are not required to meet the standard immediately upon joining. In Phase I they fully participate in cadet life, advancing while improving their physical conditioning. As they transition to the leadership phase, only then do we require them to model the behaviors they'll be encouraging in their subordinates.
 - c. **Fitness in the Cadet Regulation.** The National Cadet Team is currently working on reengineering the Cadet Programs regulation. The change to the fitness program would be announced through this regulation in the spring. We would like to move quickly on this as we know the field is eager to receive the updated materials. At least a dozen squadrons have asked more than once for an update.
 - d. **Field Tests.** There are currently over 275 units across the country participating in the beta test of the Active Cadet Fitness Program. These units are engaging cadets in fun activities, teaching lessons on fitness and nutrition, working on personal goal-setting, offering quarterly formal assessments and recognizing cadet achievement. More than 75% of these units report that they are satisfied with the new program and believe that it's a step in the right direction for cadet fitness.
 - e. **Field Test Support.** The main complaint of units participating in the field test is the challenge of tracking cadet assessment scores and credential timing manually. We have a comprehensive fitness tracking module

Layout

Margins set at 1" on all sides

Font is simple and easy to read, here Whitney 10 pt.

Line spacing set a bit more than "single," here 14 pts. (Rule of thumb: 4 points more than type size)

Headings are boldfaced, and subheadings are formatted in a consistent style

The intended audience (the national commander) knows what "eServices" and "IT" means. If the paper had been written for a more general audience, that jargon would need to be defined or somehow avoided.

A good proposal acknowledges alternatives, presents them as fairly as possible, and explains why the author discarded them.

How will we know if the program actually works? In the future, we can compare actual results against at least two claims in the paper. (1) Do the eServices features satisfy the field's expectations in making the program easy to administer? (2) Do the new standards improve first-year cadet retention?

The document is kept as brief as possible, especially considering that changing the cadet fitness program is a huge endeavor. This 2-page proposal addresses only the biggest matters. If necessary, further details could be included as attachments. Here, that might include the actual language being inserted into the regulation and a copy of the new training materials.

The proposal concludes with a specific request for action. The commander need only say, "Go!"

The paper is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors, thanks to careful proofreading and help from peer reviewers.

designed in eServices to remove this burden from the units. Fitness officers will simply enter the quarterly test scores and the software will do the rest. However, IT cannot begin to program and test this module until they know that the ACFP is approved. Once assured that the effort will not be wasted, they can begin work on this crucial tracking architecture, making the fitness program viable for general rollout.

f. **Alternative Views.**

A wing commander, Col. Curry, brought up some feedback on the Active Cadet Program including 20+ questions, objections, and suggestions. The bulk of these issues were easily resolved by our providing more background information in the training materials.

One remaining substantive concern regards the switch to quarterly testing, versus the current program's monthly testing. Our consulting professors advise that right now we're operating only a *testing* program, not a *developmental* program. They recommend youth be tested twice per year; any more is overkill.

A second substantive concern regards the whole idea of fitness performance standards being tied to cadet promotions altogether. It was suggested that cadets should participate regularly in fitness activities, and that alone would qualify them for promotion. We do this with the character program. Cadets participate in character activities, but there are no performance standards. There's merit to that idea, but we suggest that move would be too big a change to consider at this time.

4. Conclusion

This proposal is

- 1) based on the latest evidence-based, scientific understanding of youth fitness, as required by the BoG-approved strategic plan;
- 2) adapted to work in CAP's environment without departing from the core PYFP; and
- 3) answers a very real problem with first-year cadet retention.

5. Action Recommended

CAP/CC approve the proposal to align the cadet physical fitness test (CPFT) with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program test. In turn, CAP/CP will publish the updated fitness program in the next edition of the *Cadet Programs Management* regulation.

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Documents are digital, so why not include a hyperlink?

Title identifies topic, and the word "Proposal" communicates that the document will ask for the reader to support a concept or contribute to an ongoing discussion.

Author's name and contact information is included. Here, authorship is attributed to a team (CACs might take this route). Unlike Example 1 on the previous pages, this document is formatted as a paper, with the author's information up top, not formatted as a signature block.

The "Introduction" section provides context, explaining how the proposal relates to the larger picture.

Paragraphs begin with topic sentences that state the paragraph's main idea.

How will we know if the program actually works? In the future, we can compare actual results against these three claims.

This section clearly states the specific actions being proposed.

Aligning the Cadet Physical Fitness Program to the Latest Evidence-Based Standards

Proposal for the CAP Cadet Community

CAP National Cadet Team
August 2016
cadets@capnhq.gov

1. Introduction

The stated goal of the cadet physical fitness program is to make you physically fit and to motivate you to develop a lifelong habit of exercising regularly. Squadrons have been left mostly to their own devices in trying to meet this goal. Many squadrons perhaps most do little beyond administering the Cadet Physical Fitness Test to all cadets once a month, every month.

The cadet fitness program should be more than just testing. Squadrons can offer a variety of enjoyable exercises and games to help cadets reap the benefits of physical activity. We need to emphasize fitness training and education, which means giving squadrons help so they can do more than administer the CPFT. Squadrons will need recipe-like activity guides that can be implemented in the modest facilities (not full-service gyms) where they hold their weekly meetings. Further, they will need access to equipment and resources for fitness games.

In the end, the goal is to have a program that convinces cadets that regular exercise is (1) fun, (2) a pre-requisite for an airworthy body, and (3) a norm of cadet life.

2. Our Proposal

To modernize the physical fitness program we recommend the following changes:

Replace the current CPFT with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, an updated version of the now obsolete President's Challenge

Rewrite CAPP 52-18 with practical ideas for squadron fitness activities, nutrition information, and testing protocols

Move to quarterly CPFTs and allow results to count for six months

Gain appropriated (AF) funding for fitness equipment and activity kits

3. Presidential Youth Fitness Program

The PYFP is the successor to the familiar President's Challenge that the current CPFT stands upon. Still, PYFP aims to promote health and regular physical activity for America's youth. That goal is very close to our traditional goal, to develop in cadets a habit of regular exercise.

Test events remain about the same. We would still have a 1-mile run, push-ups, curl-ups, and a sit-and-reach, though the rules for the latter have changed slightly.

The "HFZ" is jargon. Usually you want to avoid jargon, but here it's an essential element of the proposal, so the term is used and quickly defined.

Headings are boldfaced, and subheadings are formatted in a consistent style

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One big difference is that the shuttle run is replaced by an event called the pacer. The pacer's objective is to run as long as possible across a 15 meter field (e.g. long hallway) at a specified pace that gets faster over time. Like the mile run, the pacer measures aerobic activity, and like the shuttle run, the pacer is especially useful during extreme weather.

Healthy Fitness Zone & Needs Improvement Zone

The real difference to the test is in the scoring and interpretation of results. Performance is classified in two general areas: Healthy Fitness Zone (HFZ) and the Needs Improvement zone. Attaining the HFZ for a test indicates that the cadet has a sufficient fitness level to provide important health benefits. The Needs Improvement zone should be interpreted as an indication that the cadet may be at risk if that level of fitness stays the same.

Because we have cadets come off the couch and join our ranks, we need to be careful that our fitness expectations in Phase I don't demotivate newcomers. Standards for airmen need to be more aspirational and less high stakes.

Accordingly, the standard for Phase I cadets would become active participation in at least one fitness activity per achievement, augmented by lots of encouragement and instruction. Not until attaining the Wright Brothers, when cadets become NCOs and accountable as leaders, would HFZ performance become a pre-requisite for promotion.

Less Testing, More Activity

Another difference between today's CPFT and the new PYFP is the frequency of testing. Squadrons would offer the test quarterly, rather than monthly. Even then, a cadet's HFZ credential would count for six months, giving extra leeway for cadet absences. In short, the less time spent testing cadets' fitness, the more time may be spent doing fun, motivational activities.

4. Alternative Views

In our talks in the cadet community, we often encounter a seemingly simple question suggesting an alternative to our proposal. Why not adopt the Air Force standard? Of course, the Air Force fitness program is built for warfighters, not youth. The service has zero resources for cadet-aged youth who are as young as twelve. The Air Force fitness program simply isn't a good fit on biological / developmental grounds.

A second alternative we also encounter regards the mix of CPFT events. Some cadets suggest that swimming be an option in the CPFT. Others suggest the push-up norms deviate from PYFP instructions. Cadets want to knock-out as many push-ups as fast as they can, not abide by the strict 3-second cadence demanded by the PYFP. Innumerable other ideas are voiced once the conversation turns to tinkering with the CPFT events. There's a simple reason none of these potential modifications can be considered. Once we depart from PYFP norms, we have no objective standard. If we allow swimming, for example, what distance, what stroke? And what performance standard is appropriate for a 16 year old male? A 13 year old female? Either we align our program with a nationally-recognized, evidence-based standard, or we create our own based on subjective hunches instead of science.

5. Conclusion

In the final analysis, the Presidential Youth Fitness Program, being an evidence-based, nationally-recognized standard, is the best potential benchmark for CAP's cadet fitness program. In fact, there is no serious alternative to the PYFP in youth fitness today.

Overall, this document's visual format differs from what was used in Example 1. That's okay. Content is king, so questions like, What am I trying to say? Who am I saying it to? should guide you in selecting a typographical format. Worry more about content than slavishly following a visual template..

Still, keep in mind that some documents, like college term papers, require writers to follow a certain typographical style.

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